

## William Charles Cole Chaiborne to Andrew Jackson, October 17, 1814, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### GOVERNOR CLAIBORNE TO JACKSON.

New Orleans, October 17, 1814.

*Sir*, Your letter of the 27th of September, with its inclosures, did not reach me until the evening of the 15th Instant. By some mistake, this letter was sent to Natchez, and from that place it descended to New Orleans, and in this way arose the delay. I regret it, because your address to the Louisianians is calculated to produce the Greatest Good, and I should have been happy to have laid it *earlier* before the people; But it shall be printed on this day, and I will take care to give it circulation; the General order respecting the Glorious defence of Fort Boyer, has already been printed in all the papers here, and a republication is unnecessary.

The Publication of your address to the free people of Colour, is delayed a few days; an unfortunate misunderstanding between the officers of the Battalion of Colour, which excites much Interest, is the subject of investigation before a Court of Enquiry now sitting; the difficulties will I hope be soon arranged, and in the mean time I have deemed it *best* to postpone giving publicity to your address. I must not disguise from you the fact, that many excellent citizens will disapprove the policy you wish to observe towards the free people of Colour; The Battalion already organized, limited as it is, excites much distrust, and I should not be surprised, if at the insuing legislature, an attempt should be made to put it down;<sup>1</sup> I must confess however, *that for myself*, I have no cause to lament the confidence, which the local Government has placed in these

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1 The following act was passed by the Louisiana legislature and on Sept. 6, 1812, approved by the governor: "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana in General Assembly Convened, That the Governor of the State of Louisiana is Authorized by virtue of the Present Act, to organize in a corps of Militia, as soon as he may judge proper, for the defence of this State, certain free men of Colour, to be chosen from among the creoles, [ *i. e.*, natives of America] and from among Such as Shall have paid a State tax. The Commander in Chief shall provide for the choice of their officers; Provided however, that their commanding officer be a white man; and for the manner of arming Them, and he Shall prescribe the Kind of discipline Which to him may appear most conducive to the success and good order of the Said Corps; Provided always, that the Said Corps Shall not consist of more than four Companies, each of Which, officers included, shall not consist of more than sixty four men, and that such as shall enter into Said corps must have been for two years previous thereto, owners, or sons of owners, of a Landed property of at least the value of three hundred dollars."

men; their General Department has been correct and they have done nothing to create in my Mind, any doubt as to their fidelity. It does appear to me, that at the present crisis these men ought to be attended to; that it is not probable, they will remain careless and disinterested spectators of the Present Contest, and *more particularly if the war* (as is apprehended) *should be brought into the bosom of Louisiana* . But on the contrary, that their feelings and best wishes would be enlisted in some way, and that if we distrusted their fidelity the Enemy might with the more ease, acquire their confidence. But Sir, this mode of reasoning, makes no impression upon some respectable citizens here; they think, that in putting arms into the hands of men of Colour, we only add to the force of the Enemy, and that nothing short of placing them in every respect upon a footing with white citizens (which our constitution forbids) could conciliate their affections. To two Gentlemen of Influence (members of the committee of defence) with whom I conversed on last evening, your policy of raising a Regiment, was suggested, and that by removing it from the state, the Jealousy and distrust of the citizens would cease; they however,

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seemed to think, that the Measure was only advisable, provided there could be a guaranty, against the return of the Regiment; But that if at the close of the War, the Individuals were to settle in Louisiana, with a Knowledge of the use of Arms, and *that pride of Distinction*, which a soldiers pursuits so naturally inspires, they would prove dangerous. Such are the Sentiments of men well informed, and well disposed, and I transmit them for your perusal. My impression is, that several companies composed of men of Colour may be raised upon the plan you suggest. But I cannot say to what number; such as are natives of Louisiana, are much attached to their families and Homes, and I am inclined to think would not enlist during the War; But such as have emigrated from St. Domingo and Cuba, may most probably be desirous to Join the army.

I am Sir,